

BURUNDI

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, Burundi is a country that should receive much greater attention from this Congress and the Obama administration in the months and year ahead. As many of my colleagues will recall, Burundi was devastated by political violence throughout the 1990s, leaving over 100,000 people dead. Yet with the mediation of the late Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere and then South African President Nelson Mandela, and the active engagement of President Clinton, a peace agreement was finally signed in August 2000. Several armed groups refused to accept the agreement, but they were brought into the fold over subsequent years. And in 2005, Burundi held multiparty national and local elections, a major milestone on its transition to peace.

In 2010, Burundi is set to hold its next round of elections. These elections have the potential to be another milestone in Burundi's path toward reconciliation, lasting stability and democratic institutions. Over the last 4 years, Burundi has made significant progress in that direction. However, there are still persistent tensions within Burundian society, which could be strained during this electoral period.

Despite all the progress that has been made, Burundi remains a fragile state and regularly appears on watch lists of countries vulnerable to internal conflict. For example, the Brookings Institution's Weak States Index last year listed Burundi as the fifth weakest state in the world, behind Iraq, the DRC, Afghanistan, and Somalia. Moreover, according to the U.N. Human Development Index, Burundi continues to be one of the poorest countries in the world.

I have been particularly concerned by reports that both the Burundian government and the armed opposition Forces for National Liberation—FNL—continue to resort to violence, intimidation and repression. According to the State Department's "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices," members of the army, the police, and the National Intelligence Service were responsible for killings, torture, and beatings of civilians and detainees in 2008, although there were fewer such reports than in the previous year. Human Rights Watch has documented a number of abuses committed against democratic political opponents by state agents and unofficial proxies in the first few months of 2009. Meanwhile, the FNL reportedly continues to abduct civilians and use violence against local officials.

In the run-up to the 2010 elections, it is quite possible that these abuses and killings will increase as the parties compete for political power. Therefore, it is critical that the international community speak out now against human rights violations and the importance of maintaining the rule of law. We need to press the Burundian government to ensure it is not partici-

pating in any abusive behavior and help it to improve the independence and capacity of its judicial institutions. We also need to engage with and help strengthen the Electoral Commission so it can guard against any manipulation actual or perceived of the electoral process. Finally, we need to continue working with the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi and the new Partnership for Peace in Burundi to advance disarmament and demobilization, transitional justice, reconciliation and development efforts. Burundi's peace process has come a long way, but the process is far from complete.

The United States has a unique role to play in these efforts. Because of our role in helping to broker the Arusha peace accord, the United States has significant good will in Burundi and is seen by many as a credible arbiter. In the years since, we have continued to work with regional stakeholders in support of peace. In the months leading up to Burundi's election, we need to increase that support and amplify our voice against abuses and political violence. I know President Obama's nominee to be our next ambassador to Burundi, Ambassador Pamela Slutz, understands these challenges and I look forward to working with her. Working together, regional leaders and the international community can help Burundians avert an electoral crisis and keep the peace process on track.

COMMENDING RICHARD "DICK" PEMBROKE

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I would like to salute Richard "Dick" Pembroke, of North Bennington, VT, for his years of service and dedication to the State of Vermont.

Dick has been chosen as this year's honoree at the fourth annual Living History Day that will be held August 9, 2009. Dick's friends and family will pay tribute to him in downtown Bennington, for his many achievements and contributions to Bennington and to the State of Vermont.

I have had the good fortune to have known Dick for many years. Born and raised on a family farm in my hometown of Montpelier, Dick and I also share St. Michaels College in Vermont as our alma mater. He is a good friend and I am delighted for him and the recognition that he is being given.

In honor of Dick Pembroke, I ask unanimous consent that a copy of the Bennington Banner's story, "Pembroke will be honored August 9 as 'Living History,'" be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Bennington Banner, July 23, 2009]
PEMBROKE WILL BE HONORED AUGUST 9 AS
"LIVING HISTORY"

NORTH BENNINGTON.—Richard "Dick" Pembroke of Harrington Road will be this year's honoree for the fourth annual Living History Day to be held on Aug. 9 in front of Powers Market.

A different resident is chosen each year to be recognized for their achievements and contribution in shaping the local community. The two-hour event offers others a venue to share stories about the honoree and enjoy time with neighbors and friends. In addition to stories, there will be music, Kevin's hot dogs and much more. The event takes place from noon to 2 p.m., is free and open to all ages.

Pembroke has lived a spiritually rich and diversified private and public life. He was the eldest of four children, born and raised in Vermont on the family farm in Montpelier. He attended St. Michael's College in Winooski and subsequently served in the Navy during the Korean War and afterward, from 1951 to 1955. He met and married his wife, MaryAnn, while stationed in Pensacola, Fla. Upon returning to Vermont a short time later, he was employed at the First National Grocery Store Corp.

Pembroke managed several stores before opening one in Bennington in 1962. His love of horticulture and the outdoors was insatiable. To fulfill this passion, he began a landscaping business on the side, which gradually grew. In 1973, he left the grocery business and directed his full attention to Pembroke Landscaping.

Being the father of one daughter and three sons kept him busy and involved with loyal education. Pembroke coached Little League and helped to construct the local Little League park. He was also a member of the Mount Anthony Union High School Booster Club from 1973 to 1980 as well as other school organizations. Pembroke joined the Lions Club in 1957 and was involved with building the current Lions Field. He was a member of the University of Vermont board from 1980 to 1986, director for the American Red Cross and a member of the Knights of Columbus since 1963. He served on the Bennington Zoning Board of Adjustment from 1975 to 1987 and was chairman for 11 years.

In 1986, he discovered another avenue of public service that suited him quite well: He was elected to the Vermont House of Representatives, where he was chairman of the House Transportation Committee for 12 of the 16 years he served. He championed the construction of Route 279 in and around Bennington and worked diligently on many infrastructure projects related to safety and economic development.

In 2006, he was voted chamber of commerce person of the year. "Retirement" is not a word in Pembroke's vocabulary. He continues to keep a foot in the door of Pembroke Landscaping and currently sits on the State Environmental board as well as trustee/director of the Southwestern Vermont Medical Center.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

COMMENDING EDDIE LEE PEPPLER

• Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, today I honor Mr. Eddie Lee Pepple, varsity basketball coach at Mercer Island High School, in retiring after 52 years of faithful service to our Nation and our youth. His distinguished career has culminated as varsity coach at Mercer Island High School where he has taught basketball for 42 years, leading the team to win 4 Washington State AAA Championships, and inspiring thousands of young students.

Coach Pepple was born in Denver, CO. He graduated from the University of Utah in 1955 with a bachelor of arts